



## Grizzly Bear Deaths Too High in the Castle Region: Rally planned to protest Logging

June 7, 2011

New Alberta Government data obtained by conservationists show that Grizzly Bears in Alberta's Castle region are dying at an unsustainable rate. In 2010, 5 grizzly bears out of a population of 51 died in the Castle region and one was trapped and relocated out of it. These six bears represent 11.8 percent of the population lost to the region in a single year. This is added to the 5 bears that were lost to the population (four killed and one relocated) in 2009.

This death rate is several times greater than the sustainable rate of 2.8 percent of a population, as defined in the Alberta government's 2010 report, *Grizzly Bear Conservation in Alberta: 2010 Management Activities and Recovery Implementation*.

"This data once again shows that the Castle is a population sink for an internationally significant grizzly bear population," says Louisa Willcox, Senior Wildlife Advocate for the Natural Resource Defense Council "The sad truth is that grizzly bears that wander from BC or Montana onto provincial land in southern Alberta face a much higher chance of being killed. That hardly constitutes grizzly bear recovery."

Grizzly bears were listed as *threatened* under the Alberta Wildlife Act in June of 2010, partly due to a high level of human-caused mortality. The numbers of grizzly bear deaths across the province have not changed since the bears were given protected status.

"These mortality rates demonstrate that even though the Alberta Government has made a promise on paper, that isn't translating into on-the-ground action that actually reverses the causes of bear deaths", says Sarah Elmeligi of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

The Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan states the primary cause of grizzly bear deaths in Alberta is the high number of roads, particularly throughout the Eastern Slopes. A recent report by Global Forest Watch Canada shows that the current road density in the Castle Special Place is often double, and sometimes triple, the recommended threshold required for grizzly bear recovery. The recent decisions to approve Waterton 68, a sour gas well, and clear-cut logging by Spray Lakes Sawmills in the Castle will lead to more roads in an already heavily impacted landscape.

"The cumulative effects that we are witnessing in the Castle with the Shell well and the clear-cut logging are the root of this problem," says Nigel Douglas of the Alberta Wilderness Association. "We don't need more roads in the Castle, we need road closures and reclamation to increase grizzly bear habitat quality and start recovering this internationally significant population."

Tomorrow, June 8, 2011, concerned citizens will rally at the McDougall Centre in Calgary (455-6 St SW) from 12pm – 1pm to show opposition for the continued development of the Castle Special Place, particularly the scheduled clear-cut logging. Sid Marty, author and songwriter, will be present to sing a few songs. Bob Sandford, the Chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative for the UN Water for Life Decade, will be present to discuss the importance of intact forests for watershed health.

"The Castle is important not only for Alberta's grizzlies; it is also critical habitat for grizzlies in the entire Crown of the Continent Ecosystem stretching through Montana and BC into Alberta. Protecting the bears in the Castle will contribute to the health of a much larger population," says Elmeligi.

"It's time for the Alberta Government to make a meaningful decision that will protect our internationally significant grizzly bear population in the Castle", says Douglas. "It's time to reverse the decision to log the Castle and make an on-the-ground difference for these bears before it's too late."

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